Balquhidder Deer Management Group Meeting

Balquhidder Hall, FK19 8PB

Tuesday 25th October 2016

At 7.30pm

Minutes

Present:

Malcolm McNaughton, Nicola Colquhoun, Emma Paterson, Richard Eadington, Alan Sneddon, Quintin Lyle, Phil Gordon, John Sinclair, Falcon Frost, Tom Turnbull, Juan Arkotxa, Jimmy Irvine, Mike Luti, Fraser Lamont, George Coyne, David Thow.

1. **Apologies**

Colin Lavin, David Lowes, Alcuin Arkotxa, Ian Dingwall

Brian Kelly no longer with FE. Colin Lavin retiring in May.

1. **Minutes from 18th March 2016 Meeting and matters arising**

Minutes were approved with no objections.

1. **Results of 2016 season Stag cull**

Numbers appear to be down on previous year, even taking into account the few properties who have not returned cull figures left.

Glen Falloch received around 40 calls from heading to the hills during this period. A few estates felt that there had been more hill walkers this season.

JI gave a quick update on the authorisation review. It was stressed that all estates must let their neighbours now at the earliest opportunity if they have taken out of season authorisations.

1. **Proposed 2016/17 Hind cull**

General consensus in the group is that there are less hinds out on the ground. Target total for the group was reduced from the previous season target.

JI expressed concern that culls were being set on a historical basis rather than taking into account spring culls. This did not mean that the target was incorrect, but that the group should be using the Spring count as one of the references when setting targets.

FE are still to provide cull targets.

It was suggested that the next meeting should take place in April so that all in season culling would have been completed.

ML felt that in bad weather, deer move to the Southern Estates of the group (FC North Katrine and WTS).

1. **Treasurers report & ADMG subscriptions**

ADMG subscription issues are still proving to be an issue to decide and collect subscriptions. MM suggested keeping the ADMG subscription the same as previous years. Properties that have a major change in cull numbers could still be adjusted in the future as appropriate.

£20 will be added to each property’s ADMG subscription for BDMG account.

No subscription has been received from Dochart Woods.

MM will send round invoices for subscription.

BDMG has £377.87 in its bank account.

1. **ADMG report (Tom Turnbull)**

Overall progress from all deer groups on their benchmarking is good. ADMG met with the SNH review panel and a report will follow later.

33 groups now have an active website and all have plans progressing.

Benchmarking scores have improved over the last two years.

It is likely there will be another review of the Deer Groups in three years time.

SQWV is likely to be revised in the wake of the ecoli outbreak.

ADMG is recommending that all members join up to the SQWV scheme.

Wasting disease (CWD) is being investigated. Leaflets and info should be given to all stalkers and guests on each property. Info available on SNH website:

<http://www.snh.gov.uk/land-and-sea/pests-and-diseases/diseases-in-deer/>

ADMG strongly urges properties to keep updating ‘Heading for the Hills’.

ADMG feel that the groups are still weak on habitat assessment, and that this is an area with room for improvement. MM made the point that the groups had come a long way in 2 years and he hoped that the ADMG did not lose sight in how much effort had gone in to this. TT suggested that groups would have to realise that this was the way things were going and the groups were weak in these.

NC said that the National Park wants to support habitat surveys.

Suggestions on how the park could help included the park doing the data collation and analysis and/or hosting survey training days.

It was mentioned that 1 more outbreak of ecoli would be enough for the government to shut down the entire Scottish venison industry. Best practice was going to be changing so that carcasses must be wiped down with food grade paper towels and not washed out.

1. **DMG Benchmark / Self-assessment**

* Approval of DMP
* Discussion on next steps to implement DMP

JI (and SNH) Happy with the plan.

FL to update plan with hotlinks to page refs, spreadsheets and maps.

Stock numbers from FE are still required.

The group gave a big thank you to those involved in preparing the plan, with particular thanks to Malcolm and Jimmy who put in the lions share of the work.

There were no objections to the plan being adopted for the group.

1. **SNH report**

Authorisation review update from JI:

An external deer panel went through a 5 month review process and came up with around 12 recommendations for the current system. It was also highlighted that technology needs to be improved. The review did not encompass looking at changing season dates.

1. **National Park report**

NC had nothing further to add that had not already been said during the meeting.

1. **Any other business**

The question was raised if FE were going to carry out a helicopter count next year.

The date for the next group count will be decided closer to the time.

It was noted that Ian was following up road traffic incidents at Glen Ogle.

DSC qualifications now have online registration. The system is very new and it seems like users should expect some delays in the short term.

The white faced stags have been seen by four different members of late.

1. **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting will take place in early April, date TBD.